

LA Portfolio Design

Building professional, flexible, and successful portfolios in Adobe InDesign

Spring 2026

Syllabus

Schedule

Monday 2:00pm – 5:00pm
March 23 – May 4, 2026
Room 129 (Computer Lab)

Instructor

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Office hours by appointment only

Summary

LA Portfolio Design is a 1.5 credit course (160 min – 80 min lecture and 80 min lab) for 7 weeks.

This elective course expands upon fundamentals acquired in the Visualization Sequence and the introductory studios, expanding the students' graphic design knowledge and desktop publishing skills.

LA Portfolio Design teaches the students develop both the skills and the knowledge to create a successful professional portfolio. In 7 weeks, students will learn to identify criteria that make a portfolio stand out and stand for its author, offering compact and compelling information. Over the course of the 7 weeks, each student will design their individual portfolio.

Over the course of the semester, LA professionals will visit the class and present the employer's perspective to the students.

Using Adobe InDesign, students will learn to effectively communicate and present their skills to fellow professionals and clients.

This course's learning goals address overall program's learning goals such as

- Applying design principles at large as well as small scales.
- Demonstrating knowledge of the professional practice skills required for the Landscape Architecture Accreditation licensure exam and manifest sensitivity to issues of power, and
- Communicating creatively with the public, communities, and policymakers in graphic, written, and verbal formats to advance social justice.

Learning Objectives

Proficiency in designing a professional portfolio that appeals to the target, painting a comprehensive but clear picture of the author, which is interesting, easy to navigate, and memorable.

Course Format

This course will be a 50:50 mix of lectures and labs.

Lectures teach the graphic design tools that are to be combined in a portfolio as well as the industry standards for a portfolio.

Lab Lessons focus on translating theory into practice (using InDesign).

Over the last two dates of the course, each student will present their portfolio and get feedback from teachers, professionals and fellow students.

Two (2) Assignments and a *Final Project* serve the student to check the newly acquired skills.

Enrollment is limited to a maximum of 20 students.

Classes and Topics

Lecture #1

Introduction – Relevant criteria – Research

What makes a LA portfolio stand out?

What do you need to know about the company/organization you are about to apply to.

How can you gear your portfolio into the direction to meet their needs and expectations?

How many pages does a portfolio usually have?

Lecture #2

Who are you? – Materials collecting, archiving, and curation

What should a future employer know about you?

How can you communicate this with text, images and design?

Building up your data base: Filing, archiving and documentation.

Assignment 1: Identifying what makes a portfolio great.

Lecture #3

Color, typography and hierarchy:

Finding the right colors and aligning all visual elements to your color range.

Creating clear visual hierarchies, guidance and an individual style with typography.

Lecture #4

Wording, copy, selecting, and dramaturgy

How much text? Depth of information and how to deliver relevant information?

What material can I lose to make my portfolio shorter but clearer?

Telling a story with text and imaging to become interesting and memorable.

Assignment 2: Setting up a portfolio template, using InDesign styles and parent pages

Lecture #5

Reality Check with a Pro #1: What does a LA pro expect from fresh college graduate's portfolio?

What are the deal breakers?

Lecture #6

The Cover Page – Finalization of your portfolio

Don't judge a book by its cover?

Lecture #7

Individual **presentations** and critiquing and exhibit of portfolios (final project) and critiquing

Student Obligations and Expectations

The course is an elective in the Landscape Architecture degree programs. This class is offered for **1.5 credits** with time spent in lecture and in lab sections.

Course obligations include

1. **Notes:** Take notes during class presentations to help retain knowledge and repeat procedures outside of class. THERE WILL BE NO SCRIPT – only the slides of the lectures will be available on Canvas.
2. **Practice:** Working in InDesign and Photoshop requires consistent use outside of class time, as well as a willingness to ask questions and review new techniques and tools introduced in the classroom.
3. **Deadlines:** Please Note: LATE PROJECTS WILL LOSE ONE FULL LETTER GRADE FOR EACH DAY THE PROJECT IS PAST DUE.
4. **Help:** If you need help, contact your instructor **in advance** of an assignment's due date.

Grading

Students will receive grades and feedback on the assignment that are completed throughout the semester. The individual breakdown of the cumulative semester grade is as follows:

Participation, Attendance	20%
Assignments #1-2 (2x 15%)	30%
Assignment #4 (Final Project: Portfolio)	50%
Maximum Course Grade	100%

Final Course Grades

All course grades are related to the following numerical scoring system (where x=your grade). Your final course grade is computed by cumulating each score received throughout the semester and weighted by the percentages given above.

x > 90	A
90 > x > 87	B+
87 > x > 80	B
80 > x > 77	C+
77 > x > 70	C
70 > x > 60	D
x < 60	F

Policies

Except for circumstances truly beyond the student's control, all projects and homework are due on the dates and at the times specified throughout the semester. No late homework will be accepted. Final Projects that are incomplete on the due date should still be submitted on the date it is due to receive at least partial credit. Turning in no work for an assignment or a project will result in a grade of zero [0]. *Any final project submitted late will lose a letter grade for each day past due.* Working beyond a due date is both unrealistic in a professional setting and unfair to your classmates in this course.

If you encounter any personal circumstances that inhibit your ability to fulfill the requirements of this course, you should immediately contact the instructor. In addition, any student with a special need, circumstance, or disability, should make an appointment to see the instructor during the first week of classes.

Departmental policy allows for a total of three unexcused absences. Four or more absences will automatically lower your final grade by one full letter grade [for example, a B down to a C+]. Each additional three absences will result in another step reduction. If a circumstance arises beyond your control, please notify the instructor *prior* to the class meeting, and other arrangements will be made. **Documented** medical and family emergencies are, of course, excused.

Attendance will be taken at the start of all lectures and labs. Late arrivals greater than 10 minutes will be marked as a full absence by the instructor. Students on academic probation have NO ALLOWABLE ABSENCES. Content missed due to an excused absence will be made available, however, an excused absence does not automatically prolong an assigned due date for any exercise or project.

If there is a printing/plotting problem, PDF files can be emailed to the instructor by the due date and the assignment will not be considered late. However, a printed/plotted version is due by the following class period, or a late penalty will be assessed thereafter.

All information in this syllabus and course schedule is subject to change throughout the semester and will be announced in the scheduled lecture periods and posted to Sakai. **It is your responsibility to stay informed!**

Violations of the University Integrity Policy

The intentional copying of another student's file or portion of the file and presenting it as your own work, is in direct violation of the University Integrity Policy. Please refer to the complete Integrity Policy at: [#](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml)

Any copying and/or "sharing" of exercises, assignments and projects will be treated as Level 2 violations and subject to the sanctions as outline in the Integrity Policy:

1. A failing grade on the assignment.
2. A failing grade for the course.
3. Disciplinary warning or probation.